BRITISH APPLY GOLDEN RULE TO PRISON CAMP

Germans at Holyport Well Treated, Though They Try to Escape.

CAPTIVE OFFICERS KNOW AMERICA

Play Football, Master Spanish and Study Map of the United States.

By GORDON BRUCE.

[By Cable to The Tribune.]

London, Dec. 18.—Military sternness and racial differences notwithstanding, the Golden Rule stands out with appealing clearness where British treatment of German prisoners of war is concerned. That was the impression I carried away yesterday after an inspection of the German officers' prison camp at Holyport. It was the first time a correspondent had been permitted to visit the quarters of the nation's officer guests.

On the one hand, stories from German sources have portrayed the sufferings of prisoners at the hands of the English. On the other, there have been persistent tales circulated in England to the effect that German officers are pampered and live in luxury. Both reports are entirely unfounded. If there is any suffering it is of the mental variety, and, while the men live comfortably, the word "luxury" could hardly be connected with bare floors, a simple cot bed and such food as can be bought for 60 cents a day.

A few details of life in Holyport prison should be interesting to American readers, owing to the fact that among the prisoners are several who have spent most of their time in the United States. Best known of these is Lieutenant Victor von Borosini, for years a social worker in Hull House, Chicago. Von Borosini married an American girl, who aided him in his work.

Forced to Fight for Germany.

When war was declared von Borosini was on a holiday in Saxony and had no choice but to join the army. His capture occurred at Ypres after he had been on the firing line for ten days. In camp yesterday he expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with his treatment by British officers, but mourned the separation from his wife, who had visited him once since he has been imprisoned. She is now in Saginaw, Mich.

Then, there is Dr. Arnold Kehlschutter, of Mount Wilson, Cal., and Captain Kurt Besser, of Los Angeles, where Captain Besser's family now reside. These men were taken from liners while trying to rejoin the Kaiser's forces during the early days of the war.

Others known in America are Millington Hermann, who spent much time studying banking in New York; his father is president of the Deutscher Bank of Berlin and he has many American friends. Dr. Friedensberg, taken from the Ancona at Gibraltar, is a canal expert and watched the construction of the Panama waterway. He gives frequent lectures to his fellow prisoners on the subject.

Among the other prisoners are Captain Beckhamer, second in command of the cruiser Gneisenau, destroyed off the Falkland Islands, and who is the ranking officer among the Germans. He acts in the capacity of prisoners' commandant, and all dealings with the captors are carried on through him. Dr. Martin Luther, surgeon of the cruiser Emden, also is at Holyport.

Another prisoner is Captain Muhlhauer, who has the distinction of being the first prisoner taken by the British. He commanded a German ship which carried no wireless and which docked at Gibraltar fifteen minutes after war was declared. Thus he walked into the arms of the British authorities.

An amazing feature of the life of the camp is that the Germans keep the windows of the sleeping rooms tightly shut all the time. The guards tried in vain to induce them to allow fresh air to enter the place, but they refused, even plugging the ventilators and keyholes.

The camp has an ideal location in the valley of the Thames, three miles from Maidenhead. The buildings occupied by the Germans were erected as a home for Nell Gwynne, in the time of Charles II. Later they were used as a military training school for boys, and this adaptation rendered them easily suitable for their present purpose. The whole prison is surrounded by a strong stockade, heavily guarded. Fifty yards inside this is an unbroken line of barred wire entanglements, also closely watched.

Watched by "Tommies."

Between the two barriers the non-commissioned British officers—"Tommies"—who make up the guard, are quartered, while Colonel Sir John Gladstone, commandant of the prison, and his aids live just outside the gates. The prisoners require constant watching, as under the German system when they return home they must give a detailed report of their efforts to escape.

On one occasion they tried to tunnel their way out, but after a hole eleven feet long had been dug the work was discovered and the vigilance redoubled to avoid a repetition of the affair. Considering that they had sixty yards to go, the attempt did not disturb the British much.

A huge field of eighteen acres is used as a recreation ground. Twice a day the men are allowed to exercise under the eyes of a strong guard. Exercise is compulsory on two days a week. At other times the prisoners do as they please about it. They are allowed pay by the British government at the rate of $1 a day below the rank of captain. Captains and higher officers receive $1.12. On this they maintain themselves, buying their provisions through British officers, while the cooking is done by an enormous German, who looks the part and grows steadily fatter.

The menial work of the establishment is done by fifty-two private German soldiers, who occupy huts on the grounds. One soldier acts as orderly to four officers. The British do not interfere with what the men do inside the buildings, so long as the regulations are obeyed. The sleeping rooms on the three upper floors are decorated in accordance with the taste of the occupants. Pictures of General von Hindenburg, the German idol adorn many of the walls.

Just now the men are making great preparations to celebrate Christmas. Many small trees have been placed in the rooms, while home-made cards of greeting are being prepared for transmission to Germany. One of these is highly amusing. It shows a Christmas tree surrounded by barbed wire entanglements. The lower floors of the house are turned into reading, writing and smoking rooms, while one spacious hall serves as a lecture and school room.

Indications that the Germans have their eyes turned toward South America after the war are seen in the energy with which the officers are studying Spanish. They go so far as to have lectures in that tongue. A long row of figures on a blackboard yesterday gave the copper output of various sections of the world. It showed the United States produced 55 per cent of the total. Germany was the lowest, with 2.6 per cent.

What is more interesting, at one end of the room was a well-drawn map of the United States, marked to indicate the location of deposits of coal, iron and copper. It bore other marks of a mysterious nature.

The inmates at Holyport look well and conditions are healthful. Not one prisoner is sick at present. The captives are well groomed, too. Uniforms were sent to them from Germany as well as money.

The latter, of course, has not come to their hands, but is held by the British to apply to the purchase of whatever they want within reason. No spirits are allowed in the camp, but beer and light wines may be bought. Sir John has a happy faculty of maintaining strict discipline and at the same time treating his charges as men and officers. While he does not expect them to be exactly cordial—and they are not—he certainly commands their respect. They appreciate his efforts to brighten in a measure their necessarily gloomy lot.

Yesterday, during the recreation hour, the prisoners indulged in a game of football, in which they are becoming quite proficient. When the weather permits tennis is very popular. All look forward eagerly to the time when they will be permitted to return home. Meanwhile they are making the best of a bad situation.

BOY TROOPS SHOW GREAT STAMINA

Canadian Chaplain Marvels at Their Cheerfulness in Face of Terrible Hardships.

(From a Special Correspondent of The Tribune.)

London, Dec. 10.—A Roman Catholic chaplain, attached to the Canadian forces, who has been travelling up and down the west front and back and forth between England and France constantly since September, says he considers every soldier who has been in the trenches a hero.

"As I see our boys march back from the trenches, covered with mud, tired to the point of exhaustion, my heart grieves for them, but when I offer them a word of comfort they reply in such a cheerful way I am ashamed of myself," said Father B., who comes from Toronto, but knows more about American politics and conditions than most New Yorkers.

We were riding on a train for Folkestone, where he was to take a boat for France. With services at a half dozen different places, the next day was to be a busy one for this big-hearted priest. He had just finished reading "The London Times," and remarked:

"These are sorry times. There are a few lines about that foolhardy trip of Henry Ford and a paragraph of Canadian news. And that's all I see from the other side this morning. Nothing but war, war, war. And it's not over yet by a long way. Why don't they keep Henry Ford home? But perhaps it will do him good to travel around in the countries over here which are not fighting. He can't do any harm to any one but his own country, and I suppose she is able to look out for herself.

"When do you think the war will end?" I asked.

"Oh, my son, I wish I knew! It won't go through another winter, and maybe it will be over by the end of summer. I know Germany well, and three years ago I witnessed one of her great manœuvres, and was told by one of the officers that all the preparation was for England's benefit. Poor old England, she was caught fast asleep, and it took her a long time to wake up. But, once she got started, she worked hard. Now she can fire three shells to every one the Germans throw. It took her a long time and cost a great many fine young lives, but we can more than hold our own now.

"No one could be expected to fight under the conditions out yonder now. It isn't a fit place to send a hunting dog, but those boys never make a complaint. They take it all as a matter of business. In the Canadian regiments are boys from the finest families. More than a thousand students from the University of Toronto are serving, and it's the same way in all the other colleges. I see these boys, who never knew anything of hardship before, struggling in the mud and water and keeping their places alongside men who have spent years roughing it in the wilds of Canada.

"I go into the hospitals and find my boys horribly maimed. The other day I found one, just over twenty and a strapping big fellow, stretched out on a hospital cot. He had lost his leg. 'Well, son,' I said, 'how are you feeling?' 'Fine, father,' he replied. 'It isn't anything. I am going to get another and I'll be as good as ever.' Now, what do you think of that? They never whimper or complain. Grit! Why, that's their middle name! We are getting plenty of men and the stuff to fight with, and when the spring comes we'll go through."